

The Dean's Dashboard

Strengthening School Management through Information and Informed Decision-Making

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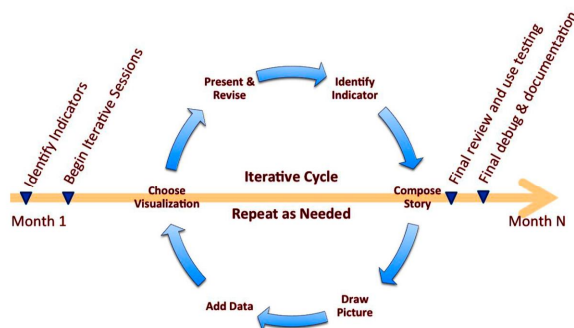
Introduction

Health workforce educational institutions around the globe are struggling to meet the increasing demand for health workers capable of providing quality health services to expanding populations. These institutions must find ways to produce more health workers within current, marginally expanding, or even decreasing budgets. More effective and efficient management of education and training institutions can play a major role in a country's ability to scale up its production of competent and qualified health workers.

The Dean's Dashboard is a computerized tool to guide a school's management team in defining management goals and tracking progress toward goal achievement. The Dean's Dashboard is meant to measure progress and chart trends, indicating either improvement over time or need for strategic action.

Methods

Version 2 of the open source District Health Information System (DHIS 2) application corresponded best to the need for an affordable, easily accessible, and user-friendly system that could be configured as a health workforce education dashboard. Adapting a rapid application development process, use cases, and drawings provided visual guidance for each step of adding data visualizations. Each session became an iteration that added to the number of indicators. We validated the approach with three pilot schools: two small private institutions in Ghana and Botswana; and one large university in South Africa.



Results

The Dean's Dashboard is most effective as part of a strategic planning process. Before a school can implement a dashboard, it needs access to high-quality, routinely collected, individual-level data. While data are usable in any easily accessed format, having data in a digital system is ideal, even in electronic spreadsheets. Pilot institutions found that setting up the dashboard's data and reports was relatively easy once the DHIS 2 interface was mastered. After a representative of an institution has been trained to configure and utilize DHIS 2, few resources are required to continue and expand its usefulness. In terms of infrastructure needed, two options exist—in the cloud or local to the institution. Small institutions may prefer to pay for a cloud-based implementation (that is, to access and use the software entirely online) as purchasing and maintaining servers may be prohibitive. Institutions with strong ICT units may prefer to install the software locally in their data centers. Configuring and implementing the system is not overly complex, but support will be essential to new users.

Figure 2. Screenshot of Dashboard Application

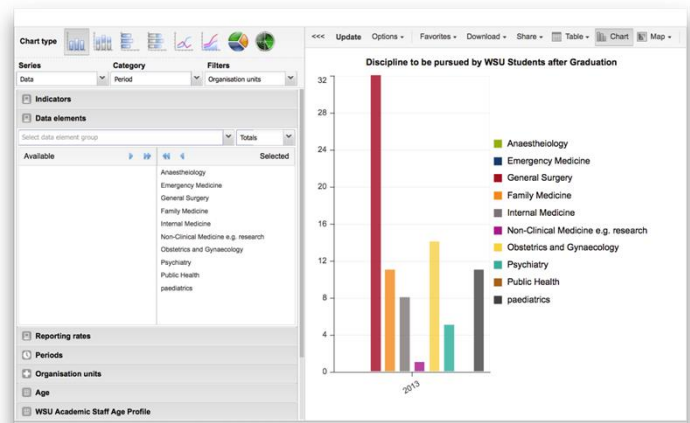
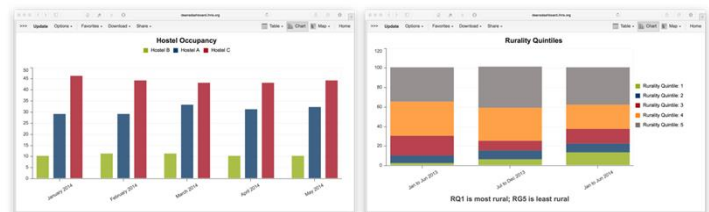


Figure 3. Data Visualization Objects
(RQ indicates rurality of localities, with RQ5 as the least rural, RQ1 as most rural)



Conclusions

Leaders of health workforce educational institutions often have little management training and may be unaware of or overwhelmed by inefficiencies and other management challenges. Configuration of the DHIS 2 software as a Dean's Dashboard offers a tool to guide a school's management team in defining management goals and tracking progress. When aligned with a school's strategic planning efforts, it offers the potential for regular reports on progress toward strategic goals as well as management information in a form that is easily accessible to institutional leaders. As an open source application, it is an affordable tool for information management and presentation.